

It's a Plan

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Break the class into small groups or couples.
2. Distribute all or some of the Expectation Cards.
3. Instruct participants to read through each Expectation Card and discuss reasonable expectations.
4. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers.
5. Have them report back to the larger group and discuss.
6. Now break the class into couples.
7. Distribute the Step-parenting Plan Worksheet to each couple and have them work together to create their plan.

Process:

It is important to have a good group conversation about each of the Expectation Cards, so each couple can weigh for themselves how they would respond. Facilitate a thoughtful discussion, respecting and welcoming the various opinions in the room. Working through the Step-parenting Plan Worksheet together will give couples the chance to agree on a plan, or guidelines, for a variety of scenarios. Again, there are no right or wrong answers as every family will be different.

Conclude:

Make sure you end this class with a positive activity.

Group Size: All

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Goal: To help step-parents who are caring for the children of their deployed spouses

Audience: Step-parents who might care for step-children while their spouse is deployed

Special Considerations: Either each couple can receive all of the cards to work through together, or the cards can be distributed to small groups to discuss and then share with the larger group. End this class with a positive activity as it could be stressful for some couples to discuss this topic.

Resources Needed:

- ✓ Expectation Cards, printed on colored card stock and cut out for distribution
- ✓ Plan Worksheet

“Reasonable or Not?” Expectation Cards

1. As a step-parent I have the same authority as my spouse does with his/her children.
2. My spouse's ex should always have the final say in matters regarding the children while my husband is deployed.
3. It will be important for my spouse to tell the kids to regard me as their parent while he/she is deployed.
4. I should have nothing to do with my spouse's ex. These kids are ours now.
5. The kids should decide where they live during my spouse's deployment.
6. I have no right to see my step-children if they are living with their other parent during deployment.
7. It will be impossible for me to interact at all with my spouse's ex, even for the sake of the kids.
8. It's not really my responsibility to care for the kids while my spouse is deployed, they have another biological parent to do that.
9. I can form a good working relationship with my partner's ex for the sake of the kids.
10. I am okay with taking on all the financial responsibility for the kids, even covering the child support, while my spouse is deployed.

Step-parenting Plan Worksheet

1. During deployment, we expect _____ 's [name] role as step-parent to change in the following ways:

2. _____ 's [name] role as step-parent will stay the same in the following ways:

3. _____ 's [name] and the children's other biological parent will need to work together on:

4. Three things I as the deployed soldier can do to support _____ [name] in her/his step-parent role are:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

5. What I as the deploying soldier expect of the children during deployment is:

6. Ways we would like to learn and grow as a family during deployment are:
